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ABSTRACT

This manual describes an effective, cost- and time-efficient approach to basic education and vocational training for adults. The approach was developed during a pilot project in Massachusetts that featured the following: capitalizing on students' interests, hands-on vocational training, the expectation that students' motivation to learn a vocational skills would carry over into motivation to improve the academic skills, and basic skills and employment training. The model was used for 4 years with more than 275 students. Half of the students found employment, even in a depressed job market, and 95 percent of the students felt that the program benefited them, even if they did not gain employment. Following a description of the pilot program, this manual provides a step-by-step approach for setting up a similar model. Information is provided on the following: choosing a vocational area, calendar, recruitment and intake, staffing, class schedule, instructional approach, developing interpersonal skills, concrete and measurable goals, long-term goals, the world of work curriculum, retention and motivation strategies, counseling and support, job development and job placement, job retention, and getting student input. (KC)

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The Simultaneous Model of Education and Training

Adult Basic Education and Vocational Skills Training

A Replication Manual

by

Barbara Garner

World Education, Boston, Massachusetts ◆ 1994

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The Simultaneous Model of Education and Training

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Introduction:
The Simultaneous Model of Education and Training

This manual describes a highly effective, cost- and time-efficient approach to basic education and vocational training that has the capacity to change the way we think about providing training to adults.

Adult education and training providers have historically used a sequential model of program design: adult students who need academic remediation must do that first, then enter skills training programs to gain a vocational skill. Students with less than high school level skills are often faced with spending years in adult basic education and GED preparation before becoming eligible for vocational training. Needless to say, few students who start with limited academic skills ever make it into vocational training and on to employment. While policy makers complain about the failure of adult basic educators to move their students into skills training, few have questioned the design of the system.

Program planners in the Massachusetts Departments of Education (DOE) and Public Welfare (DPW) conceived of a better way to help motivated students get the vocational training they need. They joined forces to sponsor a pilot project that would test their assumptions. These assumptions were:

- Program design should capitalize on student's interest in employment.
- Hands-on vocational training is intrinsically more interesting than academic remediation.
- Students' motivation to learn a vocational skill will carry over into motivation to improve the academic skills.
- Students can learn vocational and academic skills at the same time.
- A program that provides simultaneous basic skills and employment training will be faster than the sequential model.

DOE and DPW created partnerships between vocational high schools and adult basic education providers to provide, simultaneously, vocational training and adult basic education to recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) whose literacy skills were below high school level, which made them ineligible for stand-alone vocational training. The

short term goal of the program was for graduates to find employment in a training-related job. The long-term goal was to test the viability of a simultaneous model of training and basic education with adult students who not only have low level literacy skills but multiple barriers to employment as well.

As the program progressed, the term "simultaneous" took on an added meaning. Since the students had very limited job experience, information about the culture and practices of the work world had to be taught as a subject, which we called the "World of Work". That meant the students attended three classes: vocational skills, academic skills, and World of Work. We also realized that the information and skills taught in each class, as well as the attitudes we were trying to impart, had to be "integrated" or interwoven into every aspect of the program. Thus, while maintaining three separate classes, curricula and activities were integrated. This integration is discussed at length in the section titled instructional approach.

As we gained experience, we refined our philosophy and rationale. Since our programs serve long-term welfare recipients who have little work experience, the model, the integration of curricula, and all the approaches and activities we incorporate contribute to keeping students motivated and attending the program. Setting clear, short-term, achievable goals and helping students keep their long term goals in mind are tenets of our approach. Establishing high expectations and expecting students to meet them are also key to our philosophy.

The Strengths of the Simultaneous Model

The simultaneous model has a number of strengths:

- It is cost efficient in that it takes less time than traditional sequential models.
- It capitalizes on participants' motivation to seek employment.
- It enhances the skills of all staff by increasing the vocational training staff's ability to support the acquisition of literacy skills and the basic skills staff's ability to support the acquisition of vocational skills.

- It gives participants ample opportunity to develop the social skills and other work readiness they need to succeed on the job.
- It is effective in that participants show higher gains in basic skills when the basic skills are linked to vocational skills.

Our project tested two versions of the simultaneous model. In one, multiple vocational areas were available to participants. This allows a broader range of vocational choices, but makes it much more difficult for basic skills teachers to integrate vocational and basic skills curricula. In the other version, all participants were trained in the same vocational area. This seemed to work better, because it allowed for integration of academic and vocational curricula and, since they were together all day, fostered very tight bonding among the participants. The drawbacks to this version are that 1) it releases a large number of job seekers into the market in the same vocational area at the same time and that 2) participants are limited to one vocational choice.

The simultaneous program ran for four years and served more than 275 students. The model of providing training in academic, vocational, and World of Work skills simultaneously while reinforcing each via integrated curricula and activities proved to be very successful. Half of the students found employment, even in a depressed job market. 95% of the students expressed the view that the program benefitted them, even if they did not gain employment. One participant summed it up this way: "It got me motivated to go back to school and do something with my life."

What follows is a guide to developing your own "simultaneous" program. It is organized into sections, each of which addresses a different facet of the program. We have arranged them chronologically, from choosing a vocational area to providing on-going support for employed graduates. Each step is critical to ensuring the overall success of the model. We have tried to distill the lessons we learned from four years of development, implementation, evaluation, research, and refinement so that others can benefit from our experience.

Who Is This Manual For?

We have targeted workforce development policy makers, program planners and administrators, and program staff: teachers, job developers,

and counselors who work in community-based programs, skills training centers, community colleges, vocational high and other public schools, and correctional institutions. Policy makers should find this model compelling in its effectiveness. Program planners and administrators will find the guidelines needed to design a similar program that meets the needs and parameters of their systems. And finally, we hope to inspire program staff to use this manual for new ideas about how to deliver effective adult basic education and training.

Although the programs discussed in the manual were tested in vocational high schools, the model is perfectly suited for adult skills training centers in partnership with adult basic education providers. The model is certainly adaptable to a variety of adult populations. Refugee training providers concerned with the English as a Second Language level of their students would benefit from this model, as would those who work with dislocated workers.

Additional Information

The success of this model is based on the design of our approach. We tested the program and closely examined methodology and outcomes. We conducted focus groups with program participants to learn which aspects of the program enabled them to succeed, and follow up studies of program graduates to find out both how they were doing and how their use of literacy had changed based on participation in the program. We consequently have a wealth of data that we were unable to include in this brief "how-to" manual. For additional information on the programs or the graduates, please contact Barbara Garner at World Education, (617) 482-9485.

Acknowledgments

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Margie Roberts of the Department of Education for providing support and guidance in the administration of the project.

Over the course of four years, five partnerships tested the model: Blue Hills Regional in Canton and the Brockton Adult Learning Center; Roger L. Putnam Vocational and the Massachusetts Career Development Institute in Springfield; Greater Lowell Regional Vocational Technical School and the Lowell Adult Learning Center in Lowell; Greater Lawrence Regional Vocational School and the Lawrence Adult Learning Center in Lawrence; and Madison Park Vocational School and WAITT House in Boston. Thanks to the staff of each of these Partnership Projects. Special mention must be given to the staff at Greater Lawrence, which has run the project for four years and has demonstrated just how successful the model can be.

Lili Allen of Cambridge Community Services provided invaluable direction in the shaping of this manuscript. Sally Waldron and Alison Simmons of World Education also contributed substantially to the editing.

Choosing a Vocational Area

Choosing a suitable vocational area is key to the success of your program. It is most important to chose a vocational area that is hiring in your region, appeals to the clients, and will be taught by talented and dedicated staff. Keep the following factors in mind.

Job Market ♦ The job market for that vocational area must be stable or growing. Project forward to the end of the program. Even if jobs are available today, will there be jobs open when your students graduate--and in the future?

Skills Needed ♦ This model is designed to get students with less than high school level academic skills who are motivated to work into employment quickly. They must be able to gain the vocational skills they need for an entry level position in less than one year. (We encourage students to plan for further education once they have some work experience.) How many hours of vocational training will your students receive? Will that be enough to prepare them for employment in that vocational area?

Competition ♦ If a similar program is offered in your region, make sure that your graduates are substantially better prepared for the jobs, and, if possible, that your students enter the job market before the students of your competition does. Our program offered a longer and more comprehensive Certified Nursing Assistant program than the other programs in the area, and we had nursing homes calling for our graduates while graduates from other programs were turned down. Make sure you know your competition.

Appropriateness ♦ Some vocational areas are simply inappropriate for people who have struggled with literacy or language and should be avoided. For example, students who have a history of failing academically will probably not do well in jobs that are dependent upon the constant use of literacy skills, such as business support positions.

Appeal ♦ Just as not every vocational area is appropriate, not every vocational area is attractive to your target population. A two-week information session on the qualities of non-traditional careers will do little to change life-long stereotypes. Choose a vocational area that has interested members of your target population in the past.

Career Paths ♦ Concentrate on vocational areas and industries that have entry level positions and clear steps for advancement in career paths to which your clients can aspire. Health care, for example, offers a myriad of career paths.

Institutional Connections ♦ Your institution must have or develop current, active connections to employers in that vocational area. You will need an industry advisory board that can ensure that your curriculum is up to date and assist with job development and placement. It's usually very easy to entice local business people to join your advisory board and review curricula by appealing to their community spirit. Acknowledging their support and providing them with a pool of well-trained potential employees always help, too.

Skilled Staff ♦ If your program is in partnership with an institution that has not traditionally served adults, you must make sure that the vocational teachers in this area are truly interested in working with your target population and can develop the skills needed to work with adults. They must be good teachers and believe that your target population can succeed.

Calendar

We recommend that you start your program in the fall, with the traditional school year, and end it in the spring, with continued job development and job maintenance support offered all through the summer. The traditional school calendar year seems to be ingrained in us: the educational year starts in the fall. People are accustomed to arranging their lives around their children's school schedule and it's just one more easy step to get themselves ready for school then too. Plus, if you use the public school calendar, including vacations and in-service days, it eliminates child care hassles.

Later in the year you'll be pleased to find that students can't wait to get back to school after vacations. After a few months in the program they miss the camaraderie and stimulation of the classroom.

Program Length

Participants who have low literacy skills will need at least one full school year in which to increase their academic skills (and, ideally, get a GED) and gain sufficient vocational skill to secure training-related employment. By low literacy skills we mean skills that fall in the 5-8 range in Adult basic Education as measured by the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE). Participants who do not have much work experience also need that full year of school to develop the social and World of Work skills necessary to secure and keep good employment. If you are running a program for dislocated workers, they will probably have their lives already arranged so they can go to work. In that case, the length of your program should depend only on the amount of time they need to gain the academic and vocational skills they need.

Recruitment and Intake

Programs succeed or fail based on thorough and careful recruitment and intake. Your goal is to find students who are truly motivated to gain the skills they need to find meaningful employment and to actually go to work once they complete the program. If you enroll a student who is not appropriate for your program, you'll be wasting valuable resources while someone who is motivated is not being served. A debate about "creaming" has long raged in the employment and training system. We do not consider it "creaming" to seek out students who are motivated to succeed but lack the basic and vocational skills to do so.

Getting Referrals ♦ Conduct an aggressive outreach campaign to find clients for your program. Activate your "word of mouth" and referral network. Write, or better, call former students to let them know you're recruiting. Contact the local welfare office and arrange to make a presentation to all workers about the kind of student you're looking for. Also arrange to sit in the welfare office each week and recruit on site. Make connections with the adult learning centers in your area to see if they have students in class who would be suitable for your program. Ask them to share their waiting lists--perhaps some of the students waiting to get into an adult basic education program would rather be in a simultaneous program. Have community colleges refer students who need remediation to you. Talk to clergy and social service agencies. One successful recruiter was very creative about where she recruited: she set up a table at a local community event and she hung out in a popular diner to talk to people about her program. When asking for referrals, make face-to-face contact and provide people with attractive, professional-looking materials about your program that they can give out to potential participants.

Create a Choice for Yourself ♦ Assume that you will have to interview at a minimum two prospective students for every one successful intake. Remember, you want to enroll the most appropriate, most motivated of students. You want the leeway to turn down those who are not right or ready for your program. Develop a waiting list so you can terminate students who are have poor attendance and enroll others. Develop a conditional enrollment policy: students must attend with perfect attendance for two weeks before they are permanently enrolled.

Materials ♦ Before you start your recruitment process, develop a packet of recruitment and intake materials. They should include:

For distribution

- An attractive flier advertising the program that can be posted. Be EXPLICIT that the goal of the program is employment. Try to include both a daytime and an evening phone at which the recruiter can be reached.
- A brochure describing the program and its benefits. Include specific success stories with quotes from participants (from other projects your agency has run) and list places where successful graduates are now working.
- A handout that details when the project starts and ends, the location and the hours, specific requirements such as attendance, etc. and a description of the vocational training itself and the occupational area in general.
- An appointment card to use in setting up a follow up appointment for prospective participants.
- A list of child care resources if applicable.

For internal use

- A script you will use in talking with the prospective client.
- An intake form
- A basic education assessment tool. We do not recommend any particular assessment tool.

Multi-Step Procedure ♦ A multi-step intake process is necessary to allow you to judge whether the client is truly motivated, suited for the vocation, interacts well with others, can get to appointments on time, and has the appropriate level of literacy skills. Keep in mind that the goal of recruitment and intake is to enroll appropriate students, not to make friends. It's natural to want people to like you and to be drawn to people you feel need your help, but it's important to seek out the students who are ready to help themselves and really benefit from the program. This means you must provide prospective students with enough information

about your program so that they can make decisions about whether they should enroll, and you must get from prospective students enough information so that you can decide whether you should admit them. You need to learn whether:

- they meet your eligibility requirements;
- they are truly motivated;
- they are truly interested in the vocational area;
- they have the information they need to make decisions about whether the program is appropriate for them;
- they have the information they need to answer questions that will be raised by their friends and family;
- they understand the requirements of the program; and
- they have in place suitable child care and transportation.

You don't have to find everything out in one session--in fact, you shouldn't. Child care and transportation are the last issues to deal with, not the first. Don't raise barriers, raise expectations. Plan your intake so that there is less than a month between when you inform students that they are selected for the program and when the program starts.

A good sequence of intake activities includes an initial phone or face-to-face meeting, a tour of a workplace, a tour of the program site and administration of any basic skills testing that is needed, and a final interview. The tour of the workplace enables prospective students to see for themselves what it will be like to work in that particular industry. A tour of the program site is vital if the program is held in a public high school, especially if the program is held during school hours. Some adult learners shy away from returning to school settings in which they previously failed, or dislike mingling with high school students. A description of each step in the intake process follows.

Initial phone or face-to-face meeting ♦ In the first meeting you provide concrete information about: the program goal, which is training-related employment; the vocational area and types of jobs, salaries and career paths to expect; the program location, start and end dates, and days and hours of classes; the homework and high expectations staff have

of students; and that entry into the program is competitive. You will only admit the most appropriate and motivated clients.

You should provide the prospective participants with a brochure that describes the program and its benefits. It should include "success stories" that describe former students and their current jobs and the changes in their lives that resulted from participating in the program. Also give out a handout that has details on the program calendar, schedule, and location.

Make sure the client is eligible for the program, but don't take a long history yet. Don't set up barriers. Wait until the client is really interested and sure about the vocational area before you start to work on child care and transportation issues.

Answer any question honestly--don't hedge about the work load or the attendance requirements. Do stress the positive results. Set up a second meeting: invite the prospective client to go on a group tour of a company in which a successful graduate could be employed.

Tour of place of employment ♦ Take a group of prospective students on a tour of a potential place of employment. Urge the participants to ask questions and really get a sense of the environment and think about whether it's the kind of place in which they would like to work. The purpose of the tour, as stated earlier, is for prospective clients (and you) to get a sense of whether they are really interested in the vocational field and for you to see how they interact with others, whether they can keep appointments, and whether the vocational area interests them.

At the end of this activity, set up appointments for a group tour of the program site and testing.

Tour of the program site and testing ♦ Take the prospective students on a tour of the program site so they can start to visualize themselves as students. You should continue to judge their motivation and how they interact with others.

Introduce the teachers. If the program is held in a high school, have the clients consider whether they will feel comfortable in that environment. Administer whatever academic assessment you need to determine the clients' academic eligibility.

Make individual appointments with all clients who are still interested in enrolling.

Individual appointment ♦ This is the final step. At this point, assuming clients arrive enthusiastic and on time, you are usually sure about whether you will admit them or not. Occasionally you still have questions, which you should probe in this meeting. The goal of this meeting is to complete the intake process and help clients begin to identify with the program, seeing themselves as focused students on the first step towards successful employment. Should you determine that the client isn't appropriate, you must redirect clients to more appropriate services.

The multi-step nature of your intake process often overwhelms clients. Compliment them on making it through so many hurdles. Re-emphasize the positive aspects of the program and the high expectations you have for participants.

If clients have been late to or missed appointments, or you feel that for some reason they are not good candidates, explain that you don't think that they are suitable for the program right now and why. Refer them to a more suitable program or to any support services you feel are needed.

If clients are enthusiastic and appropriate, get all the intake data you need, including child care and transportation arrangements and back-up plans. Provide referrals to child care or transportation if they are needed. Do not do the arranging for them. Set a date by which they will make arrangements and check on their progress on that date.

Review the probationary enrollment policy. It's discussed in the section on retention and motivation strategies.

Congratulate them on their success at getting accepted into the program. Make sure they leave the meeting feeling excited about starting in the program, and clear about when and where to come the first day.

Staffing

The right staff is as important as good recruitment. In focus groups held with program graduates, all participants said that, despite internal motivation, it was the external motivation provided by the teaching and counseling staff that kept them in the program when their commitment flagged. This program model requires the following staff:

- A coordinator, who handles the administrative details, monitors the budget and does purchasing, and provides leadership and supervision;
- A counselor, who provides participants with support and guidance, assures good attendance by following up on absences, and connects participants with outside services;
- A job developer, who works with companies to find job openings, teaches the World of Work class, and prepares students for interviews;
- A basic skills teacher; and
- A vocational training teacher.

It also helps to have volunteer tutors who can work one-on-one with students or as classroom aides. We use a ratio of 12 students to each teacher, so we often have two vocational teachers and two basic skills teachers. The role of counselor and job developer is often combined.

Graduates from our programs all report that the staff made the difference in their success. The staff must provide students with structure, and help students to identify short term goals and a clear sense of achievement. They must act as mentors, cheerleaders, and disciplinarians, as well as instructors and facilitators of learning. The staff must believe that their students can and will succeed and convey this belief.

The ideal staff member has experience working with adults and feels that he or she has a key role in the success of the programs. The ideal staff member is creative and flexible, and can handle the diverse and sometimes seemingly overwhelming needs of the adult population served by these programs. The ideal staff member wants to work collaboratively with colleagues and is excited by idea of integrating curricula.

Preparation and Coordination

To run a simultaneous program that fully integrates all subject areas requires a substantial commitment to coordination by all staff. Weekly staff meetings are needed to plan upcoming activities, adjust calendars, and consult about student issues. In addition, teaching staff need to meet on a regular basis to coordinate curricula and find ways to reinforce concepts and skills. Staff also need individual time to review students' work, prepare lessons, and find outside speakers. This time must be built into the staffing structure. Anticipate devoting at least 25% of staff time to coordination and preparation.

Class Schedule

To provide your students with the time they need to master the skills they are seeking and to become accustomed to organizing their lives around a traditional work week, the program should run a minimum of 20 hours a week. We found that starting class at mid-day gives students a chance to deal with errands or minor crises that arise such as sick children, but the program has also been run successfully on a 7:30 am - 2:00 pm schedule.

We've found that it's best to hold the academic class in the earlier part of the day and follow it with vocational training. Vocational training, if done right, involves students in hands-on activities and is more likely than basic skills class to keep people interested in the sleepy after-lunch hour and as the afternoon draws to a close.

Here is one way to schedule the program:

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
12 -2:30	Basic Skills	Basic Skills	World of Work	Basic Skills	World of Work
2:45 - 5	Voc Skills	Voc Skills	Voc Skills	Voc Skills	Voc Skills

We have also run the program following the "week-on/week-off" schedule used by the Vocational High Schools in Massachusetts. Using this schedule, students are in vocational training class one week, and in basic skills and World of Work classes the next, etc. This model allows students to engage in extensive hands-on activities in vocational training, but may create problems with continuity.

Instructional Approach

Integrated Curricula ♦ Research on simultaneous programs has shown that using an integrated curricula greatly increases student achievement in not only vocational skills but academic skills as well. By integrated curricula we mean using vocational skills and World of Work content to teach basic skills, or emphasizing basic skills in the vocational and World of Work classrooms. The integration has three dimensions: 1) basic skills teachers use vocational and World of Work subject matter as the content of their reading, writing, and math lessons; 2) vocational teachers emphasize reading, writing, and math skills and world of work issues in teaching vocational skills; 3) World of Work teachers support reading, writing, and math skills and the specifics of the vocational area in their classes.

Developing integrated curricula depends on close coordination between the vocational, basic skills, and world of work teachers, and ample preparation time. Basic skills teachers must attend the vocational classes on a regular basis to make sure they're coordinating well with the vocational instruction. The teaching staff must have time to meet as a team to plan coordinated lessons and to pinpoint areas in which students need reinforcement. Vocational and World of Work staff might need specific training in how to reinforce reading, writing, and math skills in their classes. Everyone needs to clarify and agree upon the communication, problem solving, and critical thinking skills they are trying to convey.

Using integrated curricula is a new experience for most basic skills teachers, many of whom have little experience teaching "content." Since many GED teachers teach to the test, they may be legitimately worried about their students' ability to transfer their improved academic skills into success on the GED. GED test-taking skills should be taught in the context of an integrated curriculum.

Some teachers worry that using integrated curricula means teaching too narrowly. It doesn't. The vocational area acts as a unifying theme for the basic skills class. For example, measurement can be taught simultaneously in vocational and basic skills class. If students are preparing for a test in vocational class, the basic skills teacher can lead them in a review, teaching study skills at the same time. Following is an example of topics taken from the basic skills class in a program which had printing as its vocational area.

Math: Measurement in inches, centimeters, and picas, use of a pica ruler, fractions, proportions. All examples and word problems related to the preparation of materials for printing or calculating costs of printing jobs.

History: The history of printing--pre-Gutenberg, the impact of the invention of movable type, the impact of changing technology on printing.

Economics: The economics of a printing business, profit and loss, the nature of a "service-oriented" light industry, the interrelationship between the printing business and its suppliers.

Reading and Writing: Reading and filling out forms used in printing; journal writing about the work in the vocational shop; magazine articles from printing industry publications; vocabulary and texts from the vocational class.

World of Work: Deciphering printing industry job advertisements; field trips and internships in copy and print shops; journals about internship experiences; investigating skills and qualities needed for different jobs in the field; examining the career path in the printing field; preparing resumes that highlight skills as they relate to printing jobs.

Needless to say, these are not all the topics covered in basic skills class. This example is designed to give you a taste of what an integrated basic skills curricula might look like. And, as mentioned earlier, basic skills should be reinforced in the vocational and world of work classes.

Activity-Based Approach ♦ One of our basic assumptions is that hands-on learning is intrinsically more interesting than lecture style or work-sheet oriented teaching. This holds true for all topic areas, basic skills and World of Work as well as vocational training. Along with being more interesting, hands-on, activity-based learning that incorporates "real world" materials provides students with opportunities to build their skills in working in groups.

Developing Interpersonal Skills

Employers feel that the ability to work well with co-workers is one of the most important skills an employee can have. A successful program, therefore, involves students in activities that help them develop good interpersonal skills.

As discussed in the introduction, these skills are best taught "simultaneously". Staff should create a variety of opportunities for students to get experience working with others. These opportunities should include:

Team Building Activities ♦ Here's an example. Students are in groups of three or four. Each person gets an index card and six or eight blank address labels. One person in the group shares an accomplishment she is proud of; it can be personal or professional. The other group members think of two qualities that accomplishment exemplifies and writes one quality each on a label. For example, if someone is proud of going back to school, a group member might write "determination" on one label and "persistent" in another. The group members then read what they have written on their labels and give the labels to the person, who puts them on her index card. The participants leave this activity with index cards that lists their strengths, and a better understanding of their fellow students. Another popular activity was the development of a class photo album. Students took turns taking the album home to show their families what school and their fellow students looked like.

Cooperative Learning Activities ♦ One class used the jig saw technique, in which students learn something together and then regroup to teach their peers what they have learned, to great effect.

Committee Work ♦ For example, many classes create a coffee committee that is responsible for buying, making, and cleaning up coffee so that program members can buy cups of coffee during breaks. Other committees take responsibility for organizing class parties; choosing, inviting, and thanking speakers; or planning field trips.

Group Project and Assignments ♦ Doing and presenting research on available social services in the community is a popular group assignment, as is doing and presenting research on potential places of employment.

Group Decision Making ♦ Issues such as whether people can eat in the classroom, how to raise money for class parties, what to do about problems that arise can be decided as a group.

Improvisation and Theater Games ♦ Theater games provide both a good opportunity for students to bond together and practice for the kind of "acting" and presenting oneself that happens in job interviews. Plus, they're fun, and that's important.

All these activities should include a component that "processes" the interpersonal aspects of the experiences and gives students a chance to discuss what they have learned about working well with others.

Concrete, Measurable Goals

We have found that students in our programs are able to maintain their motivation best if they work towards concrete, measurable, short-term goals in addition to the long-term goal of successful program completion and employment. Working towards short-term goals enables students to receive frequent positive feedback and a sense of accomplishment. Here are some examples of short-term goals our students work towards:

- Each week, perfect attendance is recognized by the group.

- Each month, perfect attendance is recognized by the group and rewarded with lunch at the school restaurant.

- Academic goals for the week are posted and checked off as they are achieved.

- Individual short-term goals are developed in one-on-one meetings and recognized as they are reached.

- Special events such as class field trips to movies or museums are scheduled to coincide with completion of units.

- The Certified Nursing Assistant program gives weekly written tests that enable students to closely monitor their progress.

- Some vocational areas have hourly requirements that must be met. The students' hours are closely monitored.

- Report cards are given. Many adult literacy programs tend to stay away from such traditional school-related activities because of negative associations with students' prior school experiences. We were quite surprised to find that our students appreciate the concrete feedback. In addition to the written report, the student meet one-on-one with teachers to discuss their progress each quarter.

Long-Term Goals

In addition to assisting students to set and achieve concrete, short-term goals, the staff found it important to help students keep focused on their long-term goals of economic independence and fulfilling employment. The staff found many ways to do this. Here are some examples:

- During the first week of class, students talked and wrote about what they would do with their first pay checks. Students made collages of their ideas and posted them around the classroom, which provided them with a constant visual reminder of their goals. Later in the year the students reviewed these ideas and used them to do a budgeting activity: were their ideas feasible? (This is also an example of integrating literacy and content: talking was a pre-writing exercise; and budgeting was a math activity.)

- Internships were held up as long-term goals. Students had to develop a measurable set of vocational skills before they were eligible for internships. They also had to demonstrate punctuality, reliability, and the ability to communicate well with others.

- Graduation activities provided students with a long-term focus. Early in the program year, the students began discussions about possible graduation activities. They formed committees to plan and to raise funds for the activities. The staff was surprised to find that the students wanted traditional graduation fare: proms and yearbooks. Students were especially eager to plan their graduation, and program staff found that this event proved to be a compelling long-term focus for the group.

- Guest speakers helped keep students focused on long-term goals. Successful graduates of the program were good speakers, as were career people who had followed a non-traditional path to success.

- And finally, family-focused activities also reminded students of their long-term goals. Students decorated classroom walls with photos of themselves and their children. Children came to school so they could see where their parents were studying. Potlucks and picnics were favorite family activities.

World of Work

The overall goal of these programs is to find employment. We found that, since most of the students had little work experience, in addition to the orientation to the workplace that they received in vocational classes and the social skills that were integrated into every aspect of the program, students needed a class that specifically focused on preparing for seeking, getting, and retaining employment. We called this the "World of Work."

On the following page are topics that should be covered in the World of Work curriculum. As with the academic and vocational classes, it's best to address these topics using hands-on activities and materials. Some examples include guest speakers, videos (including video taping the students), field trips, journals, role plays, case studies, and interviews with business people.

WORLD OF WORK TOPICS	
Earning Potential	Finding a Job
Sex Role Stereotyping	Locating Openings
Career Considerations	Applications
Understanding Myself	Resumes
My Priorities	Cover Letters
The Best Kind of Work for Me	The Interview
Presentation Skills	Preparing for the Interview
Managing as a Working Parent	Thank You Notes
Banking	Negotiating Salary
Budgeting	Understanding Taxes
Benefits	Succeeding on the Job
Child Care	Language of the Workplace
Health Insurance	Written and Unwritten rules
Time Management	Workers Rights
Housing	Chain of Command
Taking Care of Myself	Handling Problems
Support Systems	Moving Up
Assertiveness	
Discrimination	

Field Trips

Field trips fulfill a variety of functions. They provide motivation and a diversion (they are fun!). They give students a chance to observe a variety of workplaces and develop a sense of the type of work environment they prefer. They offer students an opportunity to test out their growing interpersonal skills and to practice their observational skills. We encourage programs to schedule at least one field trip a month. Students always enjoy trips to businesses. Another favorite site is museums, especially those with hours when you can get in free. Many students returned with their children. One program took students on a shopping trip to introduce them to good places to find low-cost professional work clothes; another program traveled to the State House and students spoke to their legislators.

Guest Speakers

Just like field trips, guest speakers provide an added dimension to the program. Guest speakers bring new information and provide motivation. By introducing and asking questions of the speaker, students can practice public speaking skills. The programs have been very resourceful in finding speakers: program alumnae have returned to talk about their experiences on the job and getting off welfare; other women in the vocational field women have about discussed the field and career opportunities; social service specialists have provided workshops on topics such as parenting, domestic violence, and developing support networks; representatives from higher education have described options in higher education.

It's important to brief the guest speaker thoroughly about the nature of the program, its goals, and what points you would like them to emphasize. Also make sure they're clear on about how much time they will have to speak, how large the group is, and where to find you. Needless to say, have the students follow up with thank you notes.

Internships

Internships provide students with a chance to test their newly developed skills in a safe environment. They also give students a chance to develop recent work experience and good references. Internships shouldn't start until the second half of the program, when students have developed their skills and are eager to put them to use. We have found that although many staff can use their connections and networks to locate internship sites, one person, usually the world of work counselor, should be responsible for coordinating the whole process.

It is good to have students go on internships for two days a week and come to class for three days a week. This keeps the students connected with the program and allows staff to troubleshoot should any problems arise with the internship. Visit students at least once while they are on their internships.

Some tips for developing internships:

Clear Supervision ♦ Make sure that there is one employee at the internship site who is responsible for the intern and has the time to provide supervision and feedback, and that a program staff member has met with that person. We call that person the internship site supervisor. Previously-established personal connections are also important when following up on students when they are actually in their internships.

Job Descriptions ♦ Each internship position needs a clear job description. Interns and the internship site supervisors must be clear about the job duties that the interns will perform. The job should give the interns opportunities to use newly developed vocational skills.

Work Experience, Not Jobs ♦ Assure your connection at the internship site, and the internship site supervisor, if they are different people, that you are looking for internships, not jobs. (Of course, if an internship turns into a job, that's fine.)

Some tips for preparing students for internships:

Criteria ♦ Set criteria for eligibility: students have to have achieved a certain level of attendance and punctuality as well as skills before they are eligible to participate.

Interview ♦ Have students interview for the internships, either with a staff member, or, better yet, with the internship supervisor from the internship site and a staff member.

Responsibilities ♦ Make sure students understand the job description and schedule, as well as rules of the workplace.

Role of an Internship ♦ Make sure students realize that every internship does not turn into a job, but that every internship should result in a good reference.

Retention and Motivation Strategies

Our programs serve long-term welfare recipients who have little work experience. All the approaches and activities discussed so far contributed to help keep students motivated and attending the program. In addition, strict and clear attendance policies, prompt attention to absences, and constant counseling and support enabled programs to retain and graduate students.

Strict and Clear Attendance Policies ♦ The program attendance policy should be explained in the intake process and again during the first week of school, when each student receives a program handbook. Students are required to attend daily, and to contact program personnel if they are going to be absent. Attendance falling below 75% is grounds for expulsion. Any student who does not have perfect attendance during the first two weeks of the program is put on probation or refused enrollment. We suggest that you adopt similar policies, make sure that everyone is aware of them, and enforce them.

Students who have three unexcused absences receive warning letters. Additional absences are grounds for expulsion. Staff in our programs found it important to act quickly on lagging attendance and to terminate students. This sends a message to other students that the program is serious about its policies. One site uses a time clock to monitor student attendance, while another marks attendance on a poster-board chart that hangs in the classroom. As mentioned, good attendance is recognized weekly and monthly.

Students who do not call in when absent are promptly called by the counselor. Counselors also make home visits as necessary.

Counseling and Support

The teachers and counselor in these programs provide constant counseling in the form of one-on-one and group discussions; group and individual "cheerleading" and encouragement; and referrals to outside services such as housing assistance, substance abuse counseling, and psychological counseling. Although the programs do not use a case management model, as staff work coordinate their activities they share information and strategies around particular students and their needs. It's imperative for the counselor to be connected with a wide array of community services to which they can help students gain access. Examples of the types of services our staff have found for students include emergency housing and legal aide as well as child care and after school and summer camps.

Some of the programs use outside speakers to address counseling issues, others run their own discussion sessions. Discussion topics have included adapting to the school routine, balancing motherhood and work, parenting. Two programs invited the vocational school child care staff to lead discussion on parenting topics generated by the students. These sessions were of particular interest to the group.

Perhaps the most effective "counseling" that occurs in the program is the support, advice, and encouragement that the students give to each other. The acronym of one of the adult basic education programs explains this phenomenon well: "We're All In This Together." The instructional methodology, which emphasizes group work, is designed to encourage students to bond so they will give each other this support. In our follow up studies with graduates, we find that students retain as active friends a few of their classmates and miss the camaraderie and support the program provided.

Domestic Violence

Probably most difficult for the staff to grapple with is the amount of domestic violence that is evident in the students' lives. The domestic violence often escalates as it becomes evident to the program participants' partners that the students are going to complete the program. For many students, completion signifies movement into a new world of economic

independence and outside connections. This movement can be extremely threatening to some domestic partners. Programs find it important to address the issue of domestic violence early on, making community resources available to students in a low-key, non-threatening way. We advise bringing in a representative from a battered woman's shelter early and keeping resource phone numbers available. At the same time, it's important to let students make their own decisions about their relationships and their safety. Professionals warn that caring staff who say "you should" regarding leaving a batterer have only set up another failure for the victim.

Job Development and Placement

Having a strong job development component that supports the students through their job search is a key component of the program. World of Work activities are integrated from the beginning of the program. About a month before the scheduled end of the program, academic classes end and actual job search activities begin in earnest. Students are expected to attend the program full-time until they begin work. Even after they start their jobs, if their schedule allows, they are encouraged to attend job keeping meetings. These are discussed in the section on Job Retention.

We have found it useful to structure the job search portion of the program into individual and group activities.

Individual Activities ♦ These should include checking all the newspapers for job openings; preparing cover letters and resumes to respond to help wanted advertisements; getting application forms; doing follow-up calls; preparing travel routes to get to interviews; writing thank you notes; keeping a log of all activities; meeting child care and transportation needs.

Group Activities ♦ These should choosing clothes for interviews; rehearsing for interviews; debriefing after someone goes on an interview; preparing for the first week of work; problem solving issues that arise at work; learning written rules, including understanding the employee manual; learning unwritten rules; asking for time off, days off, raises, etc.; understanding the chain of command; understanding the employer's perspective; workers rights; balancing work and home; developing support systems; understanding paychecks; doing taxes.

Staff make it clear that their time is limited and they are only available to help those who truly want to work. Along with leading the activities listed above, they help locate job openings and use their connections to get interviews for the students. They also provide students with recommendations. To locate job openings, job developers draw on the vocational teaching staff, advisory board members, contacts developed via internship sites, and general industry contacts. Some job developers have found it useful to capitalize on employers' need for affirmative action hires. Job developers also comb the want ads and help their students find appropriate job postings.

Job Retention

Once students start their jobs, staff keep in touch with them by phone. They help students interpret events on the job and problem solve. As students make the transition into full or part-time employment, staff offer encouragement in the form of moral support and substantive information about employment regulations and practices as well as community resources such as after school programs. Staff are in touch with former students informally by phone for years after they finish the program.

One site also established a job-keeping support group led by the program counselor. She leads discussions about on-the-job problems and the struggle to balance work and family life. She reviews topics such as understanding chain of command, building relations with co-workers, understanding written and un-written rules. In addition to providing a setting in which program graduates can meet and talk honestly about how their lives are changing, it enables them to continue to provide the mutual support to each other that they find so valuable during the program.

Getting Student Input

Staff get feedback from students constantly, but it's also useful to actively and explicitly solicit student input about whether the program is meeting their needs and priorities. This can and be done in a number of ways. One program holds a weekly meeting at which students voice opinions about all aspects of the program. Another program brought in an outsider periodically to meet with students and solicit their input. They felt they could get more honest feedback this way. You might ask specifically about preferred learning activities, program hours, or testing schedules. Occasional surveys can be useful. Ask students not to just point out areas of strength and displeasure but to provide concrete suggestions for improvement. Of course, the more group decision making and committee work you incorporate into your program, the more students are molding the program to meet their priorities.

If you solicit formal student input, and we urge you to do so, you must be prepared to act on much of it and to share with students the reasons you are not implementing some of their suggestions.

Conclusion

We have used the simultaneous model of education and training successfully for four years now. Each of our program sites incorporates the philosophy and program elements we have described. If you choose to use the approach we have taken, be prepared for all the usual challenges that come with working with students with complicated lives. Be ready to make changes as administrative snags arise. Take advantage of opportunities as they come your way. Experiment! And please share your experiences with us.